

Experiences of nursing students undertaking clinical placement in a bachelor degree: a perspective of diversity

EDAN: Exploring Diversity among
Nursing Students on clinical placement

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My interest in this study derived from a long-standing personal and professional involvement in, and passion for, teaching nursing students. This interest was further developed since coming to Australia, whilst working with enthusiastic academic colleagues, committed to educational research, investigating the learning strategies and preferences of nursing students, and becoming aware of the importance of English language literacy. This work involved developing strategies to support students with English as a second language in the writing of assignments and designing web-based interventions to help students understand the biological and physical sciences supporting nursing practice, which included narrated glossaries of terms. Ultimately this research led to the School using web-based interventions to support nursing students during their first clinical placement. From this ethno-cultural perspective of diversity, my interest evolved to query the effect of any diversity characteristics on undergraduate nursing students' experiences during their clinical placements, which resulted in an exponential learning curve – and the current study! I would therefore like to acknowledge Associate Professor Yenna Salamonson, Dr Bronwyn Everett, Dr Roslyn Weaver and Professor Sharon Andrew for their enthusiastic approach to research, the sharing of their research skills and encouragement to begin the PhD journey and their belief that I could reach the destination.

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Statement of Authentication

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

*I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition,
I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.*

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Abbreviations

AIN	assistant in nursing
ANMC	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council
BN	Bachelor of Nursing
CI	confidence interval
EEN	endorsed enrolled nurse
ESL	English as a second language
ELAS	English Language Acculturation Scale
EN	enrolled nurse
EDAN	Exploring Diversity Among Nursing Students on Clinical Placement
EIPM	extended intervening process model
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
ICN	International Council of Nurses
IDA	information and decision-making approach
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IPT	intervening process theory
KSAOs	knowledge skills abilities other characteristics
N	sample size, total number in sample
<i>n</i>	sub-sample size, total number in sub-sample
NUM	nurse unit manager
NMBA	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
PDF	Portable Document Files
RN, RNs	registered nurse, registered nurses
SAT	similarity/attraction theory
SCT	social categorisation theory
SD	standard deviation
SE	standard error
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WIL	work integrated learning

ABSTRACT

Evidence suggests that nursing students' diverse cultures and backgrounds may have a less positive experience than mainstream students during their clinical placement and leave their nursing courses at higher rates, but whether their clinical experiences play a role is unclear. Further, little is known about which socio-demographic characteristics or attributes if any, may lead to nursing students feeling different to their peers during their clinical placements and how this may affect the quality of their clinical experiences. There is therefore a need to better understand these effects not only from the student's perspective but from the perspective of the staff who supervise them, in order to ensure students obtain maximal benefit from their placements.

This study, 'Exploring Diversity Among Nursing students (**EDAN**) on clinical placement', used a mixed methods approach involving an anonymous web-based survey. A broad-based definition of diversity described by Loden and Rosener (1991) was modified and used to include age, gender, ethnicity (including language and religious belief), sexual orientation, educational background, income, marital status, parental status, work experience and disability. First, second and third year students undertaking any Bachelor of Nursing course (N=704) and university staff involved in the clinical learning environment (N = 165) were recruited from seven Australian universities.

Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that diversity attributes affect students' experience on clinical placement. When comparing the sociodemographic characteristics of those who felt different with those who did not, students who were older, male, International, had previous nursing experience, had lesser English language skills, a previous degree, non - Australian born and not in paid employment were more likely to report feeling different ($p < 0.001$ for all characteristics except not in paid employment $p < 0.05$). Analysis of the open-ended comments refined three themes under the construct of diversity, *Difference*, *Difficulties* and *Discrimination*. Subthemes within the theme of *Difference* were "being and feeling" and "experience, exposure and expectation". Within the theme of *Difficulty* were the subthemes "not prepared for diversity" encountered during the placements, "speaking up" about the challenges, and "surviving financially", the financial impact of a reduction or absence of part-time employment. The subthemes within *Discrimination* were "prejudices do prevail", "send them home" and "walked away". The finding that students and workforce staff for whom English is a second language affected the clinical and learning experiences of students who spoke English as a first language has not been previously reported.

The model proposed used in this study, based on diversity theories was supported by the findings and also helped to identify where further research is required. The findings are important to enable the provision of appropriate support for nursing students who feel different because of socio-demographic characteristics and will also provide guidance for universities developing curricula and the clinical placement facilities where students obtain their experience. More importantly, there is an urgent need for Australia to develop a national profile of nursing students. Changes in the sociodemographic characteristics of the nursing student population have occurred and will continue. These must be acknowledged and strategies developed both locally and nationally to manage these changes.